

Testimony of Frank Fanella, MD
Pediatrician at Candlewood Valley Pediatrics
To the Public Health Committee
Senate Bill 213 - An Act Allowing Medical Assistants to Administer Vaccines
March 7, 2022

Senator Abrams, Representative Steinberg and members of the Public Health Committee, thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of Senate Bill 213 - *An Act Allowing Medical Assistants to Administer Vaccines (SB 213)*.

My name is Dr. Frank Fanella and I am a pediatrician practicing in New Milford. Our rural practice, Candlewood Valley Pediatrics, has 5 full time physicians and 2 physician assistants. We serve approximately 6,500 children and adolescents from a large and diverse area of Litchfield and Fairfield County. We accept most insurances, including all Husky plans.

Primary care pediatricians have been on the frontlines of the COVID-19 pandemic since the beginning. Pediatricians are a trusted resource for families and, as such, we are often the first stop when parents have questions about their children and COVID-19. Over the course of the past two years, we have fielded countless calls from concerned parents and provided COVID-19 testing and treatment, all while keeping up with the typical well-child visits and caring for sick patients.

While these past two years have been challenging for our practice, SB 213 offers an opportunity to alleviate some of the staffing and capacity challenges of community practices across the state. In addition to the COVID-19 pandemic, we have found ourselves having to address the exploding mental health crisis in pediatric patients, which has further stressed our practice resources. While expanding our practice to address these new pediatric concerns, we still maintain an over 90% vaccination rate in our office. However, this has become increasingly difficult to accomplish related to our inability to staff an appropriate amount of nurses (RN or LPN). Currently, we are understaffed by two full-time nurses further hindering our ability to deliver vaccinations, in a timely manner. We have advertised in multiple platforms for months without success. In direct relation to our understaffing problem, we have held back on becoming a COVID-19 vaccination site. In addition, we feel we will be unable to keep up with our regular American Academy of Pediatrics vaccination schedule if we can not fill these positions. By allowing medical assistants the ability to administer vaccines, we should be able to draw from a larger pool of applicants to fulfill our staffing shortage. We look forward to the help this bill would provide our office to continue meeting the health care needs of our community.

Thank you for your consideration of this position. If you have any questions about this testimony, please contact Frank Fanella, MD FAAP, Frank.Fanella@att.net or 860-355-8190.